

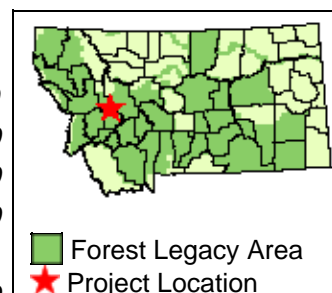
Forest Legacy Project



Nevada Lake Wildlife Management Area, Helmville (Powell County), Montana

FUNDING HISTORY

<i>Forest Legacy Program FY 2013 Funding</i>	<i>\$ 595,000</i>
<i>FY 2013 Non-Federal Cost Share</i>	<i>\$ 203,000</i>
<i>FY 2013 Project Costs</i>	<i>\$ 798,000</i>
<i>FY 2013 Project Acres</i>	<i>760</i>
<i>Forest Legacy Funding to Date</i>	<i>\$ 0</i>
<i>Total Project Costs</i>	<i>\$ 798,000</i>
<i>Total Project Acres</i>	<i>760</i>



<i>Tract Name</i>	<i>Size (acres)</i>	<i>Tract Cost</i>	<i>FLP Funding</i>	<i>Non-Fed Cost Share</i>	<i>Status</i>
Nevada Lake Addition	760	\$ 798,000	\$ 595,000	\$ 203,000	Proposed 2013
Total	760	\$ 798,000	\$ 595,000	\$ 203,000	

General Description – The Nevada Lake Wildlife Management Area (NLWMA) contains natural and public resource values at significant risk of loss. The area is home to 4 federally listed, candidate or recovered T & E species. The NLWMA provides wood products and yearlong outdoor recreation opportunities vital to regional economies. NLWMA consists of 760 forested acres within an important wildlife movement corridor. The parcels are former industrial timberlands held on an interim basis by TNC as part of a larger 89,000-acre forest conservation initiative (the Blackfoot Community Project). Local landowners urged TNC to help them conserve these lands because the risk of conversion to non-forest uses was extremely high; disposition of the subject Nevada Lake parcels would nearly complete this monumental conservation effort. This Forest Legacy Program (FLP) grant would allow Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to purchase and add the parcels to the adjacent Nevada Lake Wildlife Management Area (see map), thus leveraging past public and private land conservation investments by the FLP, FWP, USFS, TNC, and other conservation groups in this immediate area.

PROJECT FEATURES

Important:

- A1. Importance: Project lands are located in an area that was rated as the highest priority for forestland protection in the 2010 Montana State Assessment of Forest Resources.
- A2. Forest Economics: Property will be actively managed to promote forest health. It will enhance opportunities for forest management of adjoining public lands because it includes improved legal access across neighboring private lands.

- A3. Forest Economics: 2009 Montana HB 42 directs Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to have a Forest Management Plan for all wildlife management areas. HB 42 and Item A2 will ensure a continued supply of forest products from this property.
- A4. Forest Economics: FWP has the tools and authority (HB 42) to actively manage forested habitat and is doing so on nearby properties. FWP relies exclusively on local contractors and mills to perform forest management activities.
- A5. Forest Economics: Timber markets are already well established. Sun Mountain Lumber mill in Deerlodge (40 miles) employs 230 full-time workers and Pyramid Mountain Lumber in Seeley Lake (60 miles) has 110 full-time employees.
- B1. Non-Timber Economics: The project area is heavily used and highly valued by recreationists; the acquisition will guarantee permanent public recreational access to the property. FWP pays full property taxes to the state and county on land it owns.
- C1. T & E: Project adds 760 acres of conserved land to a 10,000-acre travel corridor linking core Canada lynx habitat on Helena National Forest lands to the north and core BLM land in the Garnet Mountains to the south.
- C2. T & E: The project area is occupied grizzly bear habitat (National Importance). Grizzly bears also depend on the travel corridor described in C1 above.
- C3. T & E: Protection of grizzly habitat through the proposed project meets recovery goals of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service plan for the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem.
- C4. T & E: Protection of grizzly bear habitat helps achieve goals of the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Grizzly Bear Management Plan for western Montana.
- C5. T & E: The Canada lynx population in the Garnet Mountains directly south of the proposed project lands is of heightened conservation value because it is one of the southernmost naturally occurring populations the U.S.
- C6. T & E: The property sits at the junction of three active gray wolf pack territories.
- C7. T & E: The property also provides habitat for state-identified priority conservation species including golden eagle, Clark's nutcracker, brown creeper, and genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout.
- D1. Wildlife: The property adds crucial winter range to the existing wildlife management area that supports 150 elk, 200 mule deer, and 100 white-tailed deer. The area is rated



Nevada Lake property (foreground) overlooking the Blackfoot Valley



Forested elk winter range



Grizzly bear sow and cub



West-slope cutthroat trout



Outdoor recreation

among the top 1/3 of all winter range in Montana by Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

- E1. Habitat Linkage: Project lands are identified in the American Wildlands' Priority Linkage Assessment for the Crown of the Continent Conservation Area as an important wildlife travel corridor for wide-ranging carnivore and ungulate species.
- E2. Landscape: Project lands lie between three roadless areas identified with high overall conservation values in a 2011 scientific report by the Wildlife Conservation Society.
- E3. The Blackfoot Valley is the southern keystone in the Crown of the Continent, a ten-million-acre international region in western Montana and southern Alberta and British Columbia encompassing some of the largest roadless areas in the contiguous U.S.
- E4. Eighty percent of the Crown is publicly owned, but the private lands influence the fate of the Crown's legendary wildlife because lower-elevation habitat, like the subject property, is critical for wildlife survival and landscape connectivity.
- E5. The Crown hosts the full complement of North American predators, including grizzly bear, gray wolf, mountain lion, black bear, wolverine, bobcat, Canada lynx, fisher, and marten. There are also abundant populations of elk, deer, and moose.
- F1. Watershed: Chick Creek flows through the project and is a conservation priority for FWP because of a resident population of westslope cutthroat trout. This tributary also flows into the world-class, cold-water Blackfoot River fishery.
- G1. Public Access: The project lands will remain open for public recreation and enjoyment; they currently support thousands of recreational user days per year. Primary recreation use includes hunting, hiking, and horseback riding.
- G2. Public Access: Species hunted include mountain grouse, black bear, elk, and mule and white-tailed deer. Acquisition would compliment adjacent public land and lands managed under FWP-held conservation easements.
- G3. The Blackfoot Valley has more than 225,000 acres of private land enrolled in the state hunter access program and hosts over 200,000 hunter days each year.
- G4. This project provides additional recreational access to the subject property and to adjoining public lands through improved access that comes with this acquisition.
- H1. Scenic: The undeveloped character of the timberland provides a natural setting for unobscured view of the

Continental Divide to the east and the Garnet Mountains to the south.

Threatened:

- A. Third-party Ownership: The Blackfoot Valley community and TNC purchased the land in recognition of this imminent threat and have held the land while working toward a conservation outcome since 2002.
- B. Legal Protection: Powell County zoning allows for higher density development on private property surrounding Nevada Lake (see map). This fee purchase will prevent additional conversion to residential development in the area.
- C. Landowner Circumstances: TNC has owned this property since 2004. They pay interest to their national office. They will have no choice but to sell these parcels to private individuals if not purchased by FWP or other conservation interests.
- D. Adjacent Land Use: Parcels immediately adjacent to the project lands have already been subdivided, developed, and converted to non-forest uses (see map).
- E. Ability to Develop: See Threat B1. The views from this property of the Continental Divide, Garnet Mountains and Nevada Lake make this an excellent development opportunity. Area is roaded, moderately sloped, and utilities are nearby.

Strategic:

- A. There is a long history of collaborative conservation in the Blackfoot watershed. Since 1976, more than 300,000 acres of private land have been permanently conserved, an investment of \$275 million from private, federal, and state programs.
- B. The Blackfoot Community Project was developed to prevent the imminent sale of 89,000 acres of commercial forest to real estate developers in 2002. Such development threatened to subdivide the larger parcels and forever unravel critical habitat in the Blackfoot Valley.
- C. This proposed FLP project will nearly complete the 89,000 acre Blackfoot Community Project.
- D. This project leverages past conservation investments in the area. It would double the size of the adjacent, state-owned wildlife management area (WMA) purchased in 1981 with the help of TNC who has been working in the Blackfoot Valley for over 30 years.
- E. The project adds to the 19,250 acres that have been conserved by the FLP in the valley since 2005, including the 4,891-acre Nevada Cr. FLP project on the east side of the WMA (see map)
- F. The Blackfoot Challenge, a nationally known and respected collaborative watershed group and supporting party of this project, has been integrally involved in all stages of the Blackfoot Community Project and this Nevada Lake proposal.
- G. The Blackfoot Challenge worked to complete more than 300 habitat restoration projects including 350 stream miles, 15,000 wetland acres, 60,000 upland acres, and more than 120,000 acres of weed control.
- H. The Administration launched America's Great Outdoors in 2010 and selected the Crown of the Continent as one of five pilot landscapes for implementation of this initiative. The Blackfoot Valley is the southern keystone of the Crown of the Continent.
- I. The Department of Interior released a 50-state report in November 2011, identifying Montana's Crown of the Continent as one of the country's most promising ways to reconnect Americans to the natural world.

- J. TNC's work in this area includes two of the biggest projects it has ever undertaken: the Blackfoot Community Project and the Montana Legacy Project, together preventing 400,000 acres from being converted from traditional uses.

Ready:

- A. Property owner (TNC) has held fee title of this property since 2004 and has agreed to this transaction.
- B. TNC has agreed to sell the property at 75% of appraised value in order to provide the needed 25% match.
- C. Title search and mineral determinations were completed by TNC in 2004.
- D. The existing Nevada Lake Wildlife Management Plan will be ammended to include the addition.
- E. The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks department has newly dedicated funding for managing their forested land base.
- Supporting parties include: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, The Blackfoot Challenge, The Nature Conservancy and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

For more information on the Forest Legacy Program, contact:

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